Syn.8.54.39

The Epistle of

the famous and great clerke Philip Melancton made vnto oure late Soueraygne lorde Kynge Henry the eyght, for the reuokynge and abolyshynge of the six Artycles, set forth and Enacted by the craftie meanes and procurement of certeyne of our prelates of the clergie, newly translated out of latein in to Englyshe by J.L.

The truthe wyll haue the victorie.

MOste famous, and noble kynge there were certayne Pagan Emperours of Rome, as Adrianus Pius, and after warde Varrus and Marke (beynge brethren) whiche not onely receyued fauorably the defences, of the christians, but also they were of so great valure with those moderate princes, that they swaged their wrath agaynst the christyans, and therby obteyned the aswagyng of theyr cruell decrees, whiche they had made agaynst them.

Therefore seynge there is a decree putte forth in your hyghnes realme of Englande agaynst the godlye doctryne (whiche is nedefull to the churche) whiche we professe. I beseche your grace and moste honorable maiestie both to rede and heare this oure complaynte gently. Specially seynge I haue entended to wryte these thynges vnto you, not onely for my sake, but rather for the sauegarde of the churche.

For asmoche therfore as those heathen princes dyd admytte, and allow the defences of the chrystyans, howe moche more is it beseemyng for a kynge of the christen profession, and one that is occupied in the studie of holye

scripture, to here the complaintes & warnyn-
ges of the godlie in the churche.

And I wryte so moche the gladlyer vnto your grace, for that ye heretofore fauourably receyued my letters, whiche I wrate vnto your grace, declarynge a synguler token of your benuolence towarde me, and in this matter ye gyue me an hope that ye will not vnwyllingly reade these thynges, for the matter of the wrytyng sheweth, that the byshoppes are vndoubtedly the cause and authorers of the decrees ther made, and not your grace, although as it often chaunceth they haue broughte aboute with theyr sophistrie, that your graces assent shuld come therto. As the noble drone Darius, whiche was a wyse and a righteous prince to put Daniell vnto the Lions. It was neuer vncomly for princes to redresse an vnrighteous cruelte, and as it is cōmonly sayd to haue a seconde delyberation.

The most wyse cytie of Athens had made a decree after that the cytie of Mytelene was recouered (whiche had forsaken them) that the cytie shulde be destroyed vtterly & all the cytisens slayne. There was a shyppe sent whiche shuld bryng this cōmaundement to the hoste.

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On the morowe after (the matter beynge better shewed vnto them & better ponderted) there was a decree made contrary, whiche was that the punyshement shulde not stretche vnto all, but that a fewe whiche were the causers of the forsakynge shulde be punyshed, and the cytie saued. Therfore was there sent an other shyp whiche was commaunded to make haste, that myght come before the former shyppes: as it also happened.

This Cytie of Athens, whiche gouerned farre and wyde, was not ashamed to redresse openly theyr former decree, there are many examples of this kynde, whereof I doubt not a great part are knowen to your grace. And as concernynge the churche, prynces haue verye often tymes redressed theyr decrees, as Nabuchodonosar and Darius dyd, there was a decree putte forthe in Assuerus name concernynge the kyllynge of the Jewes, the same was afterwarde called agayne. And so dyd Adryanus & Anthonie redresse theyr decres.

Although therefore there be a decree made in Englande (whiche threatenyth punyshement straunge from the custome of the true church & from the Canon lawes) yet I thought

it lawfull for vs to desyre, that this crueltye come not. And in that thynge I am not onely moued with the ieopardye of them that are of our opynion, but also I am sorye that you are as it were the seruaunt of other mens crueltie & wyckydnesse. I am sory that Christes doctryne is excluded, and that naughtye customes are stablyshed, and lechery & baudry strengthened and aproued. I heare saye that certayne excellent men in learnyng and godlynes, as Latymer & others are kept in prysō for not consentyng vnto that is decreed. Vnto whom I wyshe a strength of mynde worthye for chrystians for although there can nothyng happen vnto them better or more glory ous, then to suffre death in so playne a cōfessi on for the truthe: yet I wolde not haue your grace to be spyncled with blode of suche men. I wolde not haue these lanternes of lyghte to be quenched, nor place gyuen to the vngodly, and pharyseicall hatred of the enemyes of Christ. I wolde not haue a pleasure gyuen to the Romyshe antecrist whiche reioyseth at the herte that your grace nowe beareth harnes for hym agaynst vs, and hopeth that he shall thorowe the byshoppes laboure at length, sone re-

couer the possyons, from which he was thrust by your honeste and godly coũcel'es. He seeh that the Byshoppes grue place to youre gra; ces wyll and pleasure for a season, but with mynde and perpetuall couenaunt they be ioy ned styll with the Romyshe byshoppe.

The Romyshe byshops knowe these wyles they haue before this tyme wrestled oute of many moste sore tempestes with tarying and deferynge, they haue a remembraunce of this tyme. and of the sondrye labour of the chaũ; geable worlde whiche hath brought many thĩ; ges to a better passe.

There are many good and learned men in Germanie whiche conceyued an hope that it shulde come to passe, that your authorytie shulde also steare other kynges at the last to le aue of crueltie a thynge not mete for christen princes, & to take a delyberation for redresse of errours. And of this moste holy and godly coũsel they determyned that your grace shuld be the tynge leader and begynnyng, but now by your forsayed proceadynges we haue takẽ no smale wounde, for the wrath of other kyn; ges is hereby confyrmed, the frowardnes of the vngodlye is encreased, and great olde er; roure

roure are stablyshed. But the byshoppes vn-doubtedlye affyrme that they defende not er-roure, but true sentences of the lawe of God although they knowe the same to be contrary to the Lawe of God and to repugne to the a-postolike churche. yet notwithstandyng these craftie marchauntes can nowe fynde goodlie enterpretatyon, & (as Eurypides calleth thē) craftie oyntmētes and medycynes to blynde mennes eyes with all, & whiche after the out-warde shyne seme to eschewe errours, fraude, and abuses, whiche deceyue the ryghte iudge-ment.

This sophistrie hath now not onely a great name of wysdome in Englande, but also at Rome it beareth a great rule, where as Cardi-nall Coutaranus, Sodoletus and Reynolde Pole paynte abuses with new coūterfeyte co-lours. In douche lande also doth this sophis-trie make worse the myndes of many. where-fore I do not mervayle greatly that many be in Englande, moued by suche bewitched craf-tie persuations, although they lacke neither le-arnyng nor Iudgement. For somtyme wyse men are led from the truth with gorgeus per-suatiōe. That sayeng of Symonides is pray-

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sed, whiche was of famylyer acquentaunce with the moste excellent men of his age as Themystucles and others, that is, an oppniō doth often wronge vnto the truth, and often is a wronge oppnion more apparant then the truth, whiche thynge chiefly hapeneth in the stryfes of relygion, where the deuyll dyssacyoneth hym selfe into an angell of lyght, and garnysheth false oppnions with all fayned colours possyble. Howe fette is the cauyllation of that heretyke Samosatenus vpō the Gospell of saint Jhon, in the begynnyng was the worde. &c. yet it is full of vngodlynes, but I leaue nowe exemples of other men.

Yea in the verie decree made in your parlament howe many thynges be put sophystically and craftely, as auryculer confession (sayth the artycle) is nedefull to be kept, why doth it not playnly saye that the nūbryng of synnes in confessnon is nedefull by the lawe of God the byssshoppes knewe well, that this sentence is false. Therfore are the wordes put generally in the acte that there myght a myste be cast before the peoples eyes, whiche is as whē they saye generally confessyon is nedefull by the Lawe of God. Lyke

Lyke bewytched poyntes are in the artycle of the pryuie masses althoughe this be openly false, that it is nedefull to holde and kepe pryuie Masses. For who thoughte so, more then foure hundreth yeres after ỹ Apostles, when there were no pryuye masses at all, but after ỹ the same artycle doth folowe a sophysme, as where they say that the people myght receyue thereby ritches comfortes and benefites, why adde they not what comfortes, and what benefites? The bishoppes name not to what ende the merytes of the pryuie masses shulde be applyed, bycause they know that it can not be defended and so they play & mocke with wordes that they maye slyppe out of the application yf it be dispraysed, & yet wyll they haue the applicatiō of the priuie masses vnderstād of the people, they wyll haue this Idolatrous persuasion confirmed, and that this sacrifice deserueth remyssion of synne, of paine & punyshment, and the aswagemēt of all sorowes besides that lucre and gaine in byinge and sellinge, & what so euer mannes carefulnes hath Imagined.

A lyke sophystrie is it as when they saye ỹ the wedlocke of preestes is agaynst the worde

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of God, they not vnknowynge ỹ playn text of Paule saying a byshop must be faultles the husbande of one wyfe. wherfore they knowe ỹ wedlocke is graũted vnto priestes by the lawe of god, but because they say nowe that avowe is added, they mocke with wordȝ, for they say not onely that the wedlocke is lette with the vow but they put theyr article plainely saieng that wedlocke of priestes doth repugne to the worde of god. Besyde that what shamfulnes and tyrannie adde they when they cõmaunde thẽ to be kylled that wyll not breake theyr wedlocke & parte from theyr wyues, where as yet the vowe of priestes yf that there were any, or yf it were of valure doth onely so farre oblige and bynde thẽ that they abyde not in the myn nystration of priesthod in case that they shuld mary wyues. This is the meanynge of the counsels & of the Canon lawes as it is playn and manyfest.

O shameles Byshoppes, and O wycked Stephin Gardyner byshoppe of wyncheter, whiche thynketh thus to deceyue the eyes of chrystẽ people, and the iudgement of all the godly the whole worlde thorowe. By these cõn terfeite and deceyuable colours these thynges

haue I reherſed & theyr ſophyſtrie ſpyed oute your grace may iudge of the wyll & mynde of the byſhoppes and of theyr councels, for yf that they wyllingly & hertely ſought the truth they wolde not vſe ſuche Judglynges & coũterfeyte colours. For ſophyſtrye is a bonde thynge and worthye of hate in this & all other matters, and chyeflye to be eſchewed, & fled in relygion, for that it is moſte great wyckednesſe to rent & defyle heauenly ſaynges. And therfore hath the deuyll his name of this craft for by fraudfull cauylatiõs and bewitchynge prankes he plucketh the worde of God from men.

why do not theſe byſhoppes plainly cõfeſſe that they wyll ſuffre none amendemẽt of doctryne & true ſeruice of God: bycauſe it ſhulde beſpotte theyr dygnyties, rytches & pleaſures. why do not the other whiche haue approued theyr doynges and decrees playnely ſaye that they kepe them for the vſage of the churche, & that for profytes ſake tranquilytie and comelyneſſe: to graunte and confeſſe this thyng it were playnes & no croked matter. But nowe whyle as they fayne the ſtudye and deſyre of the trueth & godlynes vnder that pretẽce they

do but fayne folyshe and vayne sophysmes to cloke theyr peruersed wyll & mynde & yet not the lesse theyr wyll is made manyfeste, so that theyr Sophysmes do not hyde theyr errours, for doubtles the artycles in this decree, are false and vngodlie, howe goodlye soeuer they be sette forthe. wherfore it is to be desyred that the Byshoppes remembre the heauenly threate in the prophet Esaye, whiche is wo be vnto you that make wycked lawes, what wyll you do in the day of vysytation and myserye to come, and wo be vnto you that saye that euyll is good.

Nowe I come therfore vnto the very selfe thynges. It can not be denyed but that there was contynuall and horryble darkenes in the churche, for mēnes tradytions were not onely mertyrdomes of godly cōscyēces, but they were also reputed the true seruyce of God, whiche thyng is yet moche more vnworthy to be hearde, seynge also they were manyfolde fautie, for there were vowes made gyftes gyuen to churches, clothynge and dysgysynge, choyse of meates, mumblynge and pattryng of prayers, pardones, honowrynge Images saintes were worshypped with manifest Ido

latrie, the true seruice of God and good wor-
kes were vnknowē, & to conclude there was a
great lykelynes of the heathen relygion as is
yet styll at Rome the true doctrine of penau-
ce, of remyssion of synne whiche cōmeth by
fayth in Christ of the ryghteousnes of faithe,
of the difference betwene the lawe & the Gos-
pell, and of the tyght vse of the sacramentes
was vnknowen, the keyes of the churche were
aplied to mayntayne the Popes tirannie, ce-
remonies made by men were preferred farre
before ciuile duties. Vnto these errours was
ioyned a lyse defiled with lecherie by reasō of
the lawe, and vowe of syngle lyfe forbydding
the wedlocke & maryages of priestes.

Forth of the sayde darkenes God hath rai-
sed vp & purged the churche by true doctrine,
for we muste confesse that so many great and
veterate errours were not perceyued and spi-
ed out by mannes dyligence but by the lyght
of the Gospell, whiche by the gyfte of God
is shewed againe vnto the churche, for the ho-
lie Ghoste prophesied that in the latter dayes
the godlie shall haue more vehemente striefes
with the antichristes, and he prophesied also ỳ
antichrist beinge besette aboute with a great

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espany of bishops of hipocrites & of princes shulde sley the godly. That these thynges are nowe done, the thynge it selfe sheweth for the tirannie of the Bishoppe of Rome brought the errours in partly, & partly confirmed thē, and he nowe defendeth thē with all his might as the prophete Daniell prophesied. And we reioysed greatly that your grace was sepera-ted frō hym, & hoped that the Englishe church shulde florishe agayne but truly your bishop-pes are not plucked frō the romishe antichrist, for they defende his errours, naughtines and Idolatrie, for the forsayd articles are craftely picked forth by them where as they stablishe mennes traditions and confirme, & approue chiefely, vowes, single lyfe & confession, they defende not onely their authoritie, but also all maner of errours, as when they kepe still the priuie masses. Thus haue they craftely proui-ded that no redres nor amendement maye be instituted, their dignities and ritches are in safitie. The thing it selfe sheweth ẏ the bishop-pes haue brought aboute the same. who is not sorie thus to se the glorie of Christe thus op-pressed, for as I haue said ẏ matter lieth not only in these articles, of the whiche mētion is

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made in their forsaide decrees: but also the other articles of pure doctrine are al oppressed, for if mennes traditions and worshippinges of God after mēnes Imaginatiōs be nedefull, why doth Paule so often abhorre mēnes traditiōs? For it is no smale faute and synne to ordeyne Goddes seruice without the commaundement of God, or to defende & maintein suche thynges to be the true seruice of God. This boldnesse doth God horribli deteste, whiche will be knowene and worshipped after his owne worde and ordinaunce, he wyll in no wise haue religions to be Imagined after mēnes pleasures. Or els all the religions of all men were to be allowed and approued, thou shalte not leane vnto thy owne wisdome saithe the Scripture, for the father hath sente Christe and hym the father cōmaundeth to be heard & not the craftie inuentions of men, whiche do temper and forge religions to their owne couetousnes.

But as concerninge the priuie masses, vowes, single lyfe, and numbring of synnes in auriculer confession, as it is openly knowen, they are the vntrue seruice of God ordeined by men, for although the Lordes supper were

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ordeyned of the Lorde, yet the pryuie masses are an vngodly & leude vsynge of the Lordes supper, for in the pryuytie and cannon of the masse, how moch wyckednes is there for they say that Christ is offered and that this worke is a sacrifice that raunsometh the quicke and the dead. These thynges are not ordeyned of Christ, no they are alwayes agaynst the Gospel & do repugne agaynst the same, for Christ wyll not haue hym selfe to be offered of the sacrifier, nether can the worke it selfe, nether of the offerer, nor yet of the receyuer by any meanes be a sacrifice for an other for it is a manyfest Idolatrie & doth oppresse the true doctrine of our beliefe and fayth & also the ryght vse of the sacramēt, for through our belyefe & fayth in Christ we are iustyfied & made rygh teous, and not by the worke & offeryng of the sacrifier, seynge also that the supper was ordeyned, to thentent that the mynister shulde teache and dystribute it to the other that they which repent myght be admonyshed verily to beleue that ỳ promyses of the Gospell belōge vnto them seyng there is here a wytnes sette forth that we are the membres of Christe and washed with his bloude. From this vse whiche

is ordeyned in the Gospell and was obserued in the Churche more then thre hundreth yeres after Christes passyō, is it not lawefull to departe, for truly it is a great vngodlynes to chaunge the ordynaūce of God in other vses then was instytuted by hym accordynge as it is specyfied in the second of the ten cōmaūdemētes. wherfore seynge that the priuy masses by offeryng of sacryfices and applycation, & to conclude by many other wayes are moste fargone from the instytution and ordynaūce of Christe they ought not to be kept but to be done awaye for Paule sayth flye ye from idolatrie & forsoth there are manifold Idolatries in the priuie masses, whiche is no merueyle ỳ the byshops of Rome defende the same for in the latter dayes, sayeth the Scripture there shall moste great idolatrie reygne in the place of the churche as Christe doth shewe saynge, whē ye shall se the abomynation of desolatiō, which is spoken by Danyell the prophete stādynge in the holye place, he that readeth lette hym vnderstande it, and in the .xi. Chapter he sayeth, he shall worshyp the God Maosyn in his place, & the God which his fathers knewe not, shal he worshyp with Golde and seluer & pre

precyous stones, both these places speake of ꝑ
priuie masses. This maner of worshippyng,
this abusynge of the Sacramente doth God
greatly abhorre. Howe many open and mani-
fest wyckednes & crymes are founde in this
ceremonye and ryte. It is applyed to lucre &
gaynes. The wycked and the vnworthy are
compelled to receyue it, wyll they or wyll they
not. They applye it also for the quicke and ꝑ
dead. They promise to some a fortunate via-
ge, one thynge to one, and to an other, an o-
ther thynge. But all other thynges ought no
lesse to be reproued, which the ignorante peo-
ple do not so well se. For the worshyppynge
of god & his seruice ought not to be ordeyned
after mennes pleasures and Imagynations,
but accordynge to his godly ordynaunce and
commaundement. Nowe where as men make
a sacryfice of this worke and offerynge they
Imagen & thynke that priuie masses oughte
to be done and kept as though God wolde be
worshypped after that ryte and maner. And
we se that the masses are boughte & solde for
golde and syluer, and not without great coste
and apparell, & that the Sacramēt is borne
and caryed about to be worshypped in golde

and ſyluer, where as the Sacrament was not ordeyned to this entent. Wherfore ſeynge the cõmaundement of God cõmaundeth to flye Idolatrie, the priuie maſſes ought not to be kepte ſeynge alſo as it is manyfeſt that there was none in the fyrſte & prymatiue churche. And therfore I do meruey'e why that they ſay that ỹ priuy maſſes are nedeful to be kept wanted the churche thre hundreth yeres after the Apoſtles any one thynge nedefull in the Churche of God: what can be more folyſhly or wyckedly ſpoken.

We ſe nowe that priuie maſſes be defẽded with moſte great indeuoure whiche thynge is done of ſome bycauſe they feare the Loſſe of theyr lucre, of other bycauſe they pleaſe the appetyte of the common people whiche with an euyll wyll as they thynke ſuffereth this healpe to be taken from thẽ more thẽ any true cauſe why, but yet there is a playne and true cauſe why that they ought to be put awaye, fyrſt the applyinge of the maſſe is vndoubtedly wycked and vngodlye, for the ſacryfier doth not meryte and deſerue grãce for an other ſeynge that euerye one is made ryghteous and iuſtifiedby his owne fayth. Neither wyl god haue

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any man to truſt in any maner of ceremonie: but onely in Chriſtes benyfite. And verely the applynge of it for the dead is full of errours. Nowe here are Sophiſmes Imagyned & fayned all in vayne for to excuſe the applycatiō of the pryuie maſſes. For they ſaye none of all the people iudgeth otherwyſe but the worke of the ſacrifier profyteth the whole church for the pryuie cannon of the maſſe (ſaye they) doth profeſſe the ſame thynges, they do planely mocke with wordes, and ther be in dede ſome craftye marchauntes whiche denye that they applye the maſſes ſeing that they knowe that the errour of the people is all readie ynoughe ſtabliſhed & cōfyrmed by theyr dede although they thynke otherwyſe them ſelues, and what is he that ſhuld otherwyſe thynke but that faynynge and dyſimulatyon ought to be far frō the godly rytes and ceremonies. Let ve therfore vſe them as the ſcripture doth teache and as the maner and vſe was at the fyrſt churche certayne hundreth yeres. why hath the boldnes of men gone from the olde maner & vſe? why is the faute of other men now defēded whiche haue chaūged the ordynaūce of Chriſt? Nowe although any man wolde ſayne ỳ he applyeth

not the priuie masses: yet doth he the ceremo-
nie so aparte that he thynketh this obseruyng
to be the true seruyce and worshyppynge that
God requyreth, the whiche is to be improued
seinge that God wyll not be worshipped (as
sayed is) after mēnes affectyōs and pleasure,
but accordyng to his godly ordynaunce. wher
fore I beseche your grace for ỹ glorie of christ-
ees sake, that ye wyll not defēde the artycle of
the decree cōcernynge the priuie masses, but
to suffre it to be had in more dyligent delybe-
ration of the godly and learned men. Ours
haue a stable & open wytnes of ỹ fyrst church,
whiche I feare not to lay agaynst all the after
comers which haue defyled the iudgement of
the olde doctryne with many errours. The o-
ther errours nede no longe dysputation. For
wycked vowes fayned and impossible oughte
not to be kepte. There is no doubte but this is
the persuasyon of vowes that these workes or-
deyned & instituted by men are the true seruy-
ce of god, for so thynke they also that speake
moste gently. Other adde no errours whiche
is that these workes are perfectyō & deserue e-
uerlastynge lyfe. And all these oppynions do
the godly letters reproue. For Christe sayth
they

they worshyppe me in vayne with the cõmaũ-dementes of man. And Paule sayth these very obseruatyons are the doctrine of the deuyll bycause they gyue vnto mennes tradytions, a false honoure that they be thè true seruice of God they darken the fayeth and the ryghte worshippynge of god. And to the Collossiãs he sayth let no man deceyue you with fayned holines. And why (saieth he) make ye decrees? Therfore these vowes of mennes traditions, are in very dede a wycked seruice of God, beside many other fautes whiche come hereby. For the whole kynde of monckes with howe moche superstition lyue they in praieng to saintes in sundrie maner of clothynge, choise and differẽce of meates, superstitious praiers without measure, & many other abusions of ẏ whiche euerie one is a cause sufficient that the vowes are valureles. And also seinge that the moste parte of them be moued to this kynde of lyuinge for great chere and easy fedinge of their bealies vnder the pretence and colour of religion.

Furthermore as concernynge the vowe of syngle lyfe, it is not possyble for all men, as saieth Christ hym selfe, not all mẽ receiue this

worde. And all suche vowes must be broken, as maye not be perfourmed without synne, but these thynges are sufficiently expounded in an other place by vs, and forsoth I do merueile greatly ẏ the vowe of priestes is streight liar put forth in the Englishe decree, then the vowe of monkes seing the cannon lawes thē selues wyll onely & in so farre, a prieste to be obliged to single lyfe yf he remaine in the ministration & office of his preesthode. And verely I shoke for feare reading this article, for it forbiddeth Matrimonie & breaketh the mariage beinge already made. And with that addeth the paine of death for those priestes that wyll not parte frō their wyues. And although in some places ẏ godly be killed for their wedlocke, they beinge priestes, yet hath no man hitherto bene so bolde to putte suche lawes in wryting, for many dyd perceiue that al whole minded and moderate mē wolde abhorre this crueltie. & therfore they feared the iudgement of the after comers. who wolde beleue that in the churche (in the whiche there oughte to be a principall mekenes towarde the godly) there coulde remaine so great a crueltie ẏ the paine of death shulde be ordeined against the godly

for

for mariage sake. Nowe I thynke that they wyll saye that they breake theyr vowe. Vnto whom I answere. First this vowe is valureles (as is sayd before) bycause it is false seruyce and worshyppynge of God, & is therwith impossyble to be kept. Besydes that in case it were of valure, it oblygeth and byndeth them not that leaue and ceasse of any further mynistratiō of the offyce of priesthode, in case after that they mary wyues. And to conclude yf ỹ Byshops wolde prouyde remedy for saftie of conscyences, they shulde herafter consecrate preestes without any vowe, so that they maye remayne in the mynysteringe and offyce of preesthode, although afterwarde they maryed wyues, as it is manyfest by the olde cannon lawes that sometyme there was manie sacred preestes without any vowe of syngle lyfe, the whyche although they afterwarde maryed wyues, yet not the lesse they remayned styll in ỹ mynisterynge and offyce of theyr priesthode, as wytnesseth ỹ chapiter. C. Diacon. distict. C. xxviii. Nowe verely I doubte what I shall saye or complayne vpon. For as concernyng this article I may not excuse theyr ignoraūce seyng that they knowe the cōmaundement of

God where as Paule sayth bycause of forni cation lette euery man haue his owne wyfe. And euery man seeth what the lyfe of syngle liuyng is. The complayntes of the good men are knowen, and the baudrie of the euyll men is manifest. But hapetly the byshops in this matter do allowe Epicureus opyniō that they iudge that God is not offēded with baudry. Of which yf they thynke, thē plead we an hard cause before suche Judges. I do knowe that syngle lyfe is more mete for the kepyng of the pompe of byshoppes & of cathedrall churches, and to preserue theyr rytches, thē is wedlocke. And this I thynke to be the cause why ẏ they so greatly abhorre ẏ wedlocke of preestes, but O myserable churche yf that thy lawes be cō pelled not to serue the truth nor vnto the wyll of god, but vnto the wrongfull profites, pleasures, & cōmodyties of mē, for truely they do erre that thynke that they maye make lawes agaynste the commaundement of God and ẏ lawe of nature so they be profitable for preseruation of profites and rytches.

And verely I am sorie from my hertte for your graces sake (moste famous and excellēt kynge) and also for the Churche for Christes

sake

sake. ye shewe forth that ye improue and abo-
lyshe the tyrannie of the byshoppe of Rome & ye truely call hym Antichrist, but in ỹ meane tyme in a manet ye defende his Lawes which are euen the synnowes of his power. As pry-
uie masses, single lyfe, & al other superstitiõs. yea ye threaten moste cruell payne & punysh-
ment vnto good men & those that be very mē-
bres of Christ for beinge agaynst the same. ye abolisshe the very truth of the Gospell begyn-
nyng to shine in your church. This is not to take awaye Antichriste but to confyrme and stablysshe hym, I beseche your grace for oure Lorde Jesus Christes sake that ye defyle not your conscięce with the defence of these your articles whiche the byshoppes haue made of pryuie masses, of vowes of confession and of the forbiddyng & abusyng of the whole vse of the Sacramēt. For it is no smal vice & synne to stablisshe and approue Idolatrie, errours, crueltie, and baudrie. If the Romisshe byshop shulde holde a councell nowe instantlie, what other chefe articles & decrees woide he thrust abrode in ỹ worlde but these verie same which your byshoppes reherse & haue made all redie?

Knowe I beseche your grace the wyles of

the deuyll whiche is wonte chyefely to assaut and tempt the chiefe rulers and gouerners, & seynge that he is the enemye of Christe, and from the beggynnynge of the worlde he goeth prieppally aboute with all wylynesse, doynge that in hym lyeth to rayle agaynst Christe, by spreadynge abrode of wycked and vngodly opynions, and steatynge vp of Idolatrie, and besyde that, ỹ mankynde may be defyled with wrongfull slaughters and baudrie: vnto these thynges he abuseth the wyttes and ingynnes of ỹ hipocrites & the strengthes of ỹ myghty, as the storyes of all tymes do shew that great Emperours and Princes were often cruell a gaynste the Churche, yet not the lesse, some Princes dyd God plucke from that hoste of Sayntes vnto his church, & wolde haue them to know the true doctryne & seruyce of God. As Abraham taught by Ameleche & Josephe the kynges of Egipt, and afterwarde Dauid Josaphath, Ezechias, were excellent in godlinesse, Daniell moued the kynges of Caldee & Persey to the knowledge of the truthe.

And Englande brought forth a godly prince to the worlde named Constantyne in this cõpany I wolde rather wysshe your grace for to

be

be, thē amonge the enemies of Christe whiche are defyled with Idolatrie & superstition and sprincled with the bloude of ỹ godly. Of whō God wyll take punyshement as many lyke examples of the scripture do shewe & declare.

Agayne therfore I pray you (for our lorde Jesus Christes sake) ỹ your grace wyl swage and amende the byshoppes decrees, and there thorowe setue the glorie of Christe and take hede to your owne saluatiō & wealth of your church. your grace also moued with the hertie petycions and desyres of many godly men & whole worlde thorowe which pray and desyre that some kynges may applie theyr authoryties to the true redresse and amendemēt of the churche and to take awaye all vngodly & wycked seruice and worshyppyng of God, & that they maye set abrode the Gospell of Christe. Behelde also those godly mē whiche are prysoned for the Gospell sake, seynge they are ỹ true membres of Christe, for doubtles yf the decree of the byshoppes be not chaūged: theyr crueltie wyll flowe abrode in your Churche without ende. For those hath ỹ deuyll as mynisters of his fury, & woodnes agaynst christ. And thē steared he vp to teare & rēt Christes

membres. Al the godly praye and entierly be-
seke your grace that ye prefer not the wycked
and cruell sentences, & sophysticall cauellatiō
of these your byshoppes before oure true and
moste ryghteous desyre, the whiche thynge yf
they optayne of your grace, god wyl without
doubt rēdre vnto you great rewards for your
godlynes and your vertue shall be praysed by
the wrytynge of letters and voyce of all godly
men, for God wyll iudge them well. And the
remēbraūce of so great thynges wyl remayne
vnto & after comers as longe as letters lyue.
And seynge that we serue the glorie of christ
and that oure churches are Christes churches
there shall nothyng want that can defēde this
godly cause, & that can furnyshe the well de-
seruers therof with theyr dewe prayse & dys-
prayse of crueltie. Christe goeth aboute hun-
grie, thyrstie, prysoned & naked, cōplaynynge
of the woodnes of the Byshoppes and of the
moste wrongful crueltie of Kynges & Pryn-
ces desyrynge that the mēbres of his body be
not rent and torne but that the true Churche
be defended, and the Gospell to florysshe and
to know hym, receyue hym, and norysshe hym,
it is both the dnetie of a godly Kynge, and
moste

To kynge Henry the eyght:
moste acceptable seruyce to God. Thus fare
ye well at wyttenberge the laste daye of
June. Anno. M. D. xL.

Philip Melancton.

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the. 18. of Maye.